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SOURCE Vestnik Statistiki.

FUNCTIONS OF THE CENTRAL STATISTICS ADMINISTRATION
OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS USSR

[Comment: The following information on the functions of the Central Statistics Administration, newly organized under the Council of Ministers in 1948, was taken from issues of the periodical Vestnik Statistiki over the period 1949 - 1952.

Numbers in parentheses refer to appended sources.⁷

Reorganization of the Central Statistics Administration

By a decree of the Council of Ministers USSR on 10 August 1948, the Central Statistics Administration of Gosplan USSR was reorganized under the Council of Ministers. In its decree the Soviet government revealed the principal shortcomings in the organization of state statistics and placed greater responsibilities upon statistical workers.

The publication of a periodical, Vestnik Statistiki, was provided for in the decree for the purpose of throwing light on theoretical and organizational problems of statistics, and for the exchange of practical experience in this field.

"The Council of Ministers USSR takes into consideration," the decree states, "that the organization of state statistics at present does not answer the rising demands of state administration and planning of national economy, and has serious shortcomings." It is pointed out that the statistics of material supply and of the technical and economic norms are inadequately organized and in a rudimentary state; that state statistics for new techniques and natural resources are lacking; that supervision of statistics in ministries and departments is not properly organized; that methods of checking statistical reports are ineffective; that improved accounting machines are little used in statistical work; and that much statistical data collected by state and departmental statistics organs is not properly analyzed, and cannot therefore be utilized by the government.

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The Council of Ministers decreed "that the principal tasks of the Central Statistics Administration under the Council of Ministers USSR will be the following: the development and timely presentation to the government of reliable, scientific statistical data, showing the rate of fulfillment of state plans, the growth of socialist economy and culture, the presence and use of material resources in the national economy, and the relationship of the various growing branches of the economy and the reserves for exceeding the plans."

According to Vestnik Statistiki, No 1, 1949, in connection with these important tasks of Soviet state statistics, the Council of Ministers USSR placed the following responsibilities on the Central Statistics Administration: (a) the management of socialist accounting in the USSR; (b) systematic recording of the fulfillment of state national-economic plans, material and technical supply plans, and plans for the introduction of new techniques; (c) regular and timely provision of statistical data to the government; (d) organization of statistics in ministries and departments, and examination of the reliability of their reports; and, finally, (e) abridgment and improvement of reports and prohibition of illegal reports.

The government also instructed the Central Statistics Administration to improve and broaden the scope of material supply statistics in all branches of national economy, capital construction statistics, technical and economic norm statistics, labor and wage statistics, and statistics of world economy.

Vestnik Statistiki states that since the above-mentioned decree was issued by the Council of Ministers USSR, only part of the work of reorganizing the organs of state statistics and of eliminating shortcomings has been accomplished. The source further notes that much remains to be done for a complete and satisfactory reorganization.(1)

Scientific-Methodological Council of the Central Statistics Administration

In accordance with the decree of 10 August 1948, a Scientific-Methodological Council was formed under the Central Statistics Administration and was made responsible for working out problems dealing with statistical methods, programs, and directives for important statistical projects.

The work plan of the council for the first half year presumably 1949, which was examined at a meeting of the council and approved by the chief of the Central Statistics Administration, provided for: (a) a study of systematic accounting of production in wholesale prices, (b) an examination of the methods of taking inventory and the revaluation of basic funds, and (c) a survey of the administrative program of all-union trade inventory, instructions for inspecting kolkhoz budgets, the use of statistical methods in production, a system of classification in industry and agriculture, planning of textbooks on theoretical and economic statistics, and the development of scientific research work in statistics.(2)

Operation of Rayon and City Inspectorates of the Central Statistics Administration

According to Vestnik Statistiki, No 4, 1952, one of the special features of Soviet statistics is the broad ramification of local organs of the Central Statistics Administration, i.e., the statistics administrations of the republics, krais, and oblasts, the rayon and city inspectorates, and the district inspectors.

The periodical states that an important place in the organization of state statistics in the USSR is held by the rayon and city inspectorates, headed by rayon and city inspectors. These inspectorates, which handle statistical accounting in the rayons and cities, are closely connected with the central organs, it continues.

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Vestnik Statistiki goes on to state that the activities of rayon and city inspectorates are directed toward guaranteeing the fulfillment of the great responsibilities placed on the state statistics organs by the party and government. The state statistics organs, it continues, collect and evaluate statistical data according to a definite plan, which gives specifications for obtaining certain indexes within prescribed time limits, as required for the state administration and planning of national economy. Rayon and city inspectorates guarantee the timeliness and reliability of statistical surveys submitted to the government by enterprises, establishments, and organizations, and on orders of the Central Statistics Administration, make inventories and carry out other statistical research.(3)

Systematic inventories are made of the availability of ferrous and non-ferrous metals, construction and lumber materials and fuel supplies in enterprises and construction projects, and in sales and supply bases and warehouses; inventories are also made of the availability, use, and technical condition of equipment. These inventories have great significance. They provide information on the reserves of the most important materials which, at the time of the report, are available in various enterprises, ministries, and departments, and in the USSR economy as a whole, for the fulfillment of state plans for production and capital construction. On the basis of these data, the government makes decisions and takes measures for the more practical use of available resources. Also, the information is used by planning organs in the preparation of yearly state plans of material and technical supply of the national economy and of the material balance sheets and supply plans.(4)

According to Vestnik Statistiki, No 4, 1952, the most important duty of rayon and city inspectorates of the Central Statistics Administration is the inspection and control of statistical accounting and the systematic verification of its quality in divisions of rayon and city executive committees of the soviets of workers' deputies, in other rayon and city organizations, in rural soviets, kolkhozes, MTS, sovkhoses, enterprises, construction projects, and institutions.

Rayon and city inspectors are called upon to combat illegal accounting, attempts to alter data, and the antistate tendencies of some workers who put departmental and local interests above the interests of the state. According to the periodical, they must also guard against attempts to conceal unutilized equipment and raw materials, and attempts to falsify reports of plan fulfillment.(5)

Vestnik Statistiki, No 4, 1952, states that the inspectorates of the Central Statistics Administration are directly subordinate to the statistics administrations of the union and autonomous republics, krais, and oblasts. In actual operations, the inspectors of the Central Statistics Administration are not dependent on local organizations. They are not allowed to go beyond the statistics' investigations previously decided on, or to gather additional data without special permission of the Central Statistics Administration. In this respect, the periodical adds, there is strict centralization, which is characteristic of the structure of Soviet state statistics organs. At the same time, the rayon and city inspectorates are very close to the local organizations in their practical assistance and in their work of directing the economic and cultural life of the rayon and city.

Rayon and city inspectors present statistical materials to supervisory rayon and city organs in the amount and order established by the Central Statistics Administration, and submit for their examination problems connected with the growth of national economy and culture of the rayon or city. The materials offered by the inspectors are to aid the local supervisory organs in their

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correct analysis and evaluation of facts, in their study of the progressive and lagging enterprises and kolkhozes, in disclosing shortcomings, and bringing out the reserves for exceeding the plans.

Vestnik Statistiki goes on to say that in the work of rayon and city inspectorates, the skilled preparation of various types of documents, reports, decision drafts, etc., is extremely important. A report prepared at the proper time, containing the results of statistical research and accompanied by clear, concrete, and practical conclusions and recommendations, is a document of great importance, it continues. The preparation of such a document involves a thorough study of the problem, the collection and analysis of materials, and the drawing of well-founded conclusions. However, the periodical states, it is not enough to prepare an excellent report or draft and to see that a decision is made. Follow-up action must be taken to see that the decision is put into practice, it adds. The periodical further states that the experience of leading rayon and city inspectorates shows conclusively that the efficient work of these inspectorates, to a large extent, is the result of daily, constant checking of the execution of decisions. For example, a rayon inspector prepares a report after examining the accounts and bookkeeping of animal husbandry in several kolkhozes. On the basis of this report, the leading rayon organs make certain decisions. The inspector then checks on the practical execution of these decisions.

Vestnik Statistiki continues:

A large number of workers, including economists, statisticians, bookkeepers, accountants, and calculators, take part in the collection and preparation of statistical data in each rayon. Hundreds of employees and workers have a hand in the examination of statistical data and the verification of its reliability.

A close relationship with public organizations of the rayon and with workers of industrial enterprises, kolkhozes, and MTS is indispensable to the successful work of rayon and city inspectors. Statistics is the concern of the whole country, and USSR workers take a serious interest in correct and accurate data.

In all their activities, the rayon and city inspectors depend on the work of district inspectors, who form the initial link in the centralized system of state statistics. How efficiently the district inspectors operate depends upon how well they are directed and trained by the rayon and city inspectors.(6)

Planning in the Central Statistics Administration

Vestnik Statistiki, No 4, 1952, notes that the Central Statistics Administration under the Council of Ministers USSR carries out its work according to a definite plan, which calls for the solutions to problems placed before it by directives of the party and decrees of the government.

The work plan of the Central Statistics Administration determines the exact volume and time limit of each statistical report, and the fulfillment of the plan is a priority responsibility for all organs of state statistics, the periodical continues. All statistics administrations of oblasts, krays, and republics, as well as the rayon and city inspectors, are given precise time schedules. At the same time, a necessary reserve of time is provided for carrying out tasks which confront the local organs of state statistics.

According to the periodical, the work plan is set up for a year. On the basis of this plan, statistics administrations of the republics, krays, and oblasts set up quarterly plans, and rayon and city inspectorates prepare monthly plans.(7)

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Vestnik Statistiki, No 4, 1952, states that the correct planning of work in rayon and city inspectorates is most important. Until recently [July - August 1952], it continues, some statistics administrations which had established work plans for rayon and city inspectorates did not take into account the great load of work necessitated by the centralized plan in the first 10 days of the month. In the summer months, moreover, the periodical states, when work was being done on the recording of crop acreage and the determination of crop yield, the statistics administrations charged the inspectorates with the fulfillment of additional tasks in verifying departmental reports, with the analysis of statistical materials, and with other work. This impaired the quality of work in the inspectorates and the timely presentation of statistical materials, the periodical concludes.(8)

Vestnik Statistiki, No 4, 1952, states that by an exchange of experience, it was discovered that the existing practice of planning statistical work varies in different locations. Some statistics administrations establish for the rayon and city inspectorates of the Central Statistics Administration yearly work plans and quarterly plans for the examination of departmental reporting and the analysis of statistical materials. Other administrations establish quarterly plans, but do not break them down by month, and there are still others which prepare only copied extracts from the central plan of statistics for the inspectorates.

The structure of plans also varies, according to the periodical. Some administrations arrange their work plan in chronological sequence according to the time limit for fulfilling this work, as prescribed by the Central Statistics Administration. Other administrations arrange their work functionally by branches of statistics. The contents of the plans also have many shortcomings. The work plans for rayon inspectors, as a rule, are established without regard for the peculiarities of the individual rayons.

The periodical goes on to say that the plans very seldom provide measures for guaranteeing the authenticity of statistical data and double checkups of departmental accounting. Conferences with the managers and workers of enterprises, rayon organizations and institutions, to improve accounting and reporting methods, are also not provided for. Statistics organs often overload the rayon and city inspectors with different tasks which are sometimes not sufficiently justified. In completing such projects, the rayon and city inspector is distracted from his basic duties of fulfilling the central plan for statistical work.

The planning of work for district inspectors is unsatisfactorily organized, the periodical continues. Checkups have revealed that in many oblasts rayon inspectors do not plan the work of their district inspectors, who work only on isolated tasks. In those cases where the work of the district inspectors is planned, the plans are not concrete. The names of the kolkhozes, enterprises, and organizations, where the district inspectors should carry out their work, are not indicated. As a result, the district inspectors are not effectively employed. They sometimes visit the same kolkhozes or the same industrial enterprises several times, and do not frequent others for long periods of time.

The same periodical notes that some rayon and city inspectors force their district inspectors to spend their time collecting reports prepared by various enterprises, instead of auditing and organizing the preparation of reports and accounts in kolkhozes, sovkhoses, and industrial enterprises. Thus, the periodical states, the district inspectors are reduced to mere collectors of reports, which is of course incorrect.(9)

According to Vestnik Statistiki, No 4, 1952, not long ago [date of periodical, July - August 1952], the Central Statistics Administration USSR worked out detailed instructions concerning the procedure of work planning for local

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organizations. These instructions were stated in an order of the Administration, "On the improvement of planning in the work of rayon and city inspectorates and district inspectors of the Central Statistics Administration." (10)

At present [July - August 1952], the established system of planning for rayon inspectorates of the Central Statistics Administration is making use of the experience of capable inspectorates, and applies methods of planning that have been proved in practice.

The new system of work planning provides that the statistics administration of oblasts, krays, and autonomous republics must prepare a quarterly plan (broken down by month) for the rayon and city inspectorates, not later than 5 days before the beginning of each quarter. The time limits for completing the work are indicated in chronological order. Under this system, for very large projects not only the planned date of completion, but also the duration of important phases of work is indicated.

The plan of a rayon inspectorate includes all projects specified in the central plan of the Central Statistics Administration USSR, and, in addition, work to be fulfilled in accordance with directives of the statistics administrations of oblasts, krays, and ASSRs.

Vestnik Statistiki states that it is sometimes impossible in the quarterly plan of an inspectorate to anticipate all the statistical work which the inspectorate will have to complete in the course of a quarter. In a year's time the periodical continues, there may be certain kinds of work not foreseen by the yearly or quarterly plans, which must be performed in accordance with special instructions of the Central Statistics Administration or the statistics administrations of union republics. Thus, it states, the need arises for establishing monthly plans that are more detailed and more precise than the quarterly plans prepared for the rayon and city inspectors by the statistics administrations. According to the periodical, such monthly plans must be prepared by the rayon and city inspectors of the Central Statistics Administration 2 days before the beginning of each month. In addition to indicating the completion dates for presentation of statistical material in chronological order, the inspector is directed to indicate the time periods for fulfilling each separate job, and designate the persons handling this work, i.e., statistician of the inspectorate, district inspectors, and the rayon or city inspector himself.

The periodical goes on to say that, apart from the over-all plan for rayon inspectorates, the inspector is required to draw up a calendar plan for his district inspectors at the beginning of each month. In conclusion, Vestnik Statistiki states that in the plan for the district inspectors, all tasks to be performed during the month are enumerated, with planned dates of completion, and the exact name of each sovkhoz, kolkhoz, rural soviet, enterprise, and organization which must be visited is indicated. (11)

SOURCES

1. Vestnik Statistiki, No 1, 1949
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., No 4, 1952
4. Ibid., No 5, 1951
5. Ibid., No 4, 1952
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.

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